



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
**Oceanography**

**2024-2025  
Graduate Student  
Academic Handbook  
Department of Oceanography  
Texas A&M University**

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# Introduction

## About this Handbook

Howdy! Welcome to the Department of Oceanography at Texas A&M University! This academic handbook is provided to all Oceanography graduate students to:

- Familiarize you with the department, college and university policies
- Provide a resource to help guide you through the degree process.

Familiarize yourself with this handbook and refer to it when you need information on departmental policies. To maintain standards in graduate education, the university has several mechanisms for monitoring your progress. Failure to adhere to university rules can delay your graduation and cost you money. The departmental handbook is a living document that is updated annually.

This academic guide provides much of the information you need; however, it is not exhaustive and may not answer all your questions. Specific requirements change frequently, and this handbook is current as of the date stamped at the bottom of the page. Current information is always available from the [Department of Oceanography Academic Advisor](#) or the [Graduate and Professional School](#).

Another useful resource is [the Graduate Catalog](#). The Graduate Catalog provides information about the academic programs at Texas A&M University. Included is information regarding admissions, academic regulations and requirements, academic calendars, services available to students, academic offerings, and a list of administrative offices.

**\*\*Note: The Department of Oceanography tries to keep information in this handbook as up to date as possible. In the unforeseen circumstance that information presented here directly conflicts with university rules and regulations, the university rule supersedes the handbook.**

## Your Responsibilities as a Graduate Student

University faculty and staff are here to guide you through your graduate school process, but ultimately your education is your responsibility. Consult with your faculty advisor concerning course

selection. Frequently check your student account for any holds. Find out what your degree requirements and deadlines are and meet them. Ask questions if you need further explanation. It is your responsibility to know the requirements for your degree and to meet all deadlines. Take advantage of the many opportunities to learn about organization, management, and leadership in the oceanographic community. Regardless of your career path, you will enter a workplace in which you have a decision-making role. Graduate student organizations provide opportunities for student to participate in real decision-making and gain practical experience.

## University Policies

### Aggie Code of Honor

For many years Aggies have followed a Code of Honor, which is stated in this very simple verse:

**An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.**

The [Aggie Code of Honor](#) is an effort to unify the aims of all Texas A&M students toward a high code of ethics and personal dignity. For most, living under this code will be no problem, as it asks nothing of a person that is beyond reason. It only calls for honesty and integrity, characteristics that Aggies have always exemplified.

The Aggie Code of Honor functions as a symbol to all Aggies, promoting understanding and loyalty to truth and confidence in each other.

### Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities at institutions that receive federal financial assistance.

Sexual harassment, including sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination and is therefore prohibited under Title IX. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating or hostile work or educational environment.

Texas A&M University is committed to providing an environment of academic study and employment free from harassment or discrimination to all segments of its community; its faculty, staff, students, guests and vendors; and will promptly address all complaints of discrimination, sexual harassment, and related retaliation in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. More information about Texas A&M's Title IX policies can be found [here](#).

## **Consensual Relationships**

The Texas A&M University System is committed to maintaining work and educational environments that are free from conflicts of interest, favoritism, and abuse of authority. The Texas A&M consensual relationships [policy](#) addresses amorous, romantic, and/or sexual relationships that, although consensual, may create actual or perceived ethical, discriminatory, and/or harassing situations disruptive to the member community.

## **Texas A&M University Student Rules**

Each student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with and to comply with the [Texas A&M University Student Rules](#).

## **Mental Health and Wellness**

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from [University Health Services](#). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

# **Programs Offered**

## **Degrees in Oceanography**

Thesis-based graduate work in Oceanography is offered at both the Master of Science (M.S.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) levels. Programs are designed to provide the student with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamentals of oceanography, with a core emphasis on communication and data collection/evaluation.

Research and thesis completion comprise a significant part of each

program.

At the heart of these degrees is an independent, original research program culminating in a publishable thesis or dissertation. Cutting-edge research opportunities at both the M.S. and Ph.D. levels are available in the highly interdisciplinary fields of Biological, Chemical, Geological, and Physical Oceanography.

The M.S. degree consists of 32 credit hours of combined coursework and research. The Ph.D. program entails 96 credit hours of combined coursework and research when entering with a bachelor's degree, and 64 when entering with a thesis-based M.S. in a related field.

### **Degree in Ocean Science and Technology**

The non-thesis, professional degree of Master of Ocean Science and Technology (MOST) serves students seeking a rigorous, course-based degree with an emphasis on large dataset processing and analysis. Students progressing through the MOST degree program will complete 36 credit hours of coursework. This program is also offered as a Fast Track (3+2) program with the following programs: B.S. in Environmental Geosciences, B.S. in Geology, B.S. Meteorology, and B.S. in Oceanography.

## Graduate Degrees in Oceanography

Master of Ocean Science and Technology (MOST)* - Non-Thesis	Master of Science in Oceanography (M.S.)	Doctor of Philosophy in Oceanography (Ph.D.)
<p><b>Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCNG 603 (3cr) – Comm. Ocn. Sci.</li> <li>• OCNG 604 (3cr) – Ocean Observing</li> <li>• OCNG 608 (3cr) – Physical Oceanog.</li> <li>• OCNG 655 (3cr)- Experimental Design and Analysis in Ocn.</li> <li>• OCNG 657 (3cr) – Data Methods and Graphical Representation in Ocean.</li> <li>• 1 of the following:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ OCNG 620 (3cr) - Biological Ocn.</li> <li>○ OCNG 630 (3cr) - Geological Ocn</li> <li>○ OCNG 640 (3cr) - Chemical Ocn.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 1 of the following:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ OCNG 656 (3cr) – MATLAB programming for Ocean Sci.</li> <li>○ OCNG 669 (3cr) – Python for Geosciences</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 4 OCNG 600 level elective courses</li> <li>• OCNG 661 – Advanced Oceanographic Data Analysis and Communication (3cr)</li> </ul> <p><b>Total required credits = 36</b></p>	<p><b>Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCNG 603 (3cr) – Comm. Ocn Sci</li> <li>• OCNG 608 (3cr) – Physical Oceanog.</li> <li>• OCNG 620 (3cr) - Biological Ocean.</li> <li>• OCNG 630 (3cr) - Geological Ocean.</li> <li>• OCNG 640 (3cr) - Chemical Ocean.</li> <li>• 2 semesters of seminar OCNG 681 (1cr each)</li> <li>• Courses required by advisor or committee (e.g., OCNG 609 for some specialties)</li> <li>• 600-level Elective courses</li> <li>• OCNG 691 Research (maximum of <b>8 credits</b>)</li> <li>• Proposal</li> <li>• Defense</li> <li>• Thesis</li> </ul> <p><b>Total minimum required credits = 32</b></p>	<p><b>Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCNG 603 (3cr) – Comm. Ocn Sci</li> <li>• OCNG 608 (3cr) – Physical Ocean.</li> <li>• OCNG 620 (3cr) - Biological Ocean.</li> <li>• OCNG 630 (3cr) - Geological Ocean.</li> <li>• OCNG 640 (3cr) - Chemical Ocean.</li> <li>• 2 semesters of seminar OCNG 681 (1cr each)</li> <li>• Courses required by advisor or committee (e.g., OCNG 609 for some specialties)</li> <li>• 600-level Elective courses</li> <li>• OCNG 691 Research</li> <li>• Qualifying Exam (without MS)</li> <li>• Proposal</li> <li>• Preliminary Exam</li> <li>• Defense</li> <li>• Dissertation</li> </ul> <p><b>Total required credits = 96 (without M.S.) 64 (with M.S.)</b></p>
<p><b>Prepares for possible** careers related to:</b> Ocean observing; Marine technician; Data analyst; Others</p>	<p><b>Prepares for possible** careers related to:</b> Oil and gas companies; Consulting; Policy advising; Going on to Ph.D.; Others</p>	<p><b>Prepares for possible** careers related to:</b> Academics; Government Labs; Consulting; Industry; Others</p>

\*This is a non-thesis terminal degree, and it does not allow you to bypass the M.S. if wanting to pursue a Ph.D.

\*\*This list is not exhaustive or meant to guarantee a position.

## Degree Requirements

### Master of Science Students

All Master's students are required to submit a degree plan with 32 credit hours of coursework. All students are required to take OCNG 603 (Communicating Ocean Science), OCNG 608 (Physical Oceanography), OCNG 620 (Biological Oceanography), OCNG 630 (Geological Oceanography), OCNG 640 (Chemical Oceanography), and 2 hours of OCNG 681 (Seminar). The degree plan can include up to 8 hours of OCNG 691 (Research). Any remaining credit hours are fulfilled with classes (non-691 hours) chosen under the direction of the student's committee. No more than 6 credit hours of 300 and 400-level classes can be used on a M.S. degree plan. M.S. students will also be required to complete a [residence requirement](#), submit a research proposal, complete their final defense as well as submit a Thesis. M.S. students must have at least three committee members, with at least one member who has a primary administrative location in the Department of Oceanography. The chair must have chair



status in OCNG and at least one outside member is required. The outside committee member must be on the TAMU [Graduate Faculty](#), but their primary affiliation must be with another department.

### Sample Degree for Master of Science in Oceanography (M.S.)

		<b>SEMESTER 1</b>		<b>Hrs.</b>		<b>SEMESTER 2</b>		<b>Hrs.</b>	
<b>YEAR 1</b>		OCNG 608 – Physical	3	OCNG 620 – Biological	3				
		OCNG 640 – Chemical	3	OCNG 630 – Geological	3				
		OCNG 681 – Seminar	1	OCNG 603 – Comm. Ocean Science	3				
		OCNG 691 – Research	2						
		<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>				
<b>YEAR 2</b>		<b>SEMESTER 3</b>		<b>Hrs.</b>		<b>SEMESTER 4</b>		<b>Hrs.</b>	
		OCNG 600-level elective	3	OCNG 600-level elective	3				
		OCNG 600-level elective	3	OCNG 691 - Research	6				
		OCNG 681 – Seminar	1						
		OCNG 691 - Research	2						
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>					
<b>Total = 36 credit hours</b> (note: The maximum number of OCNG 691 credits allowed in a M.S. degree plan is 8, but the degree plan can only have a total of 32 credit hours listed. Students need to be registered full time (9 credit hours in Fall/Spring semesters) to maintain employment (GAR/GAT/GAL), thus there will likely be some OCNG 691 hours completed that are not listed on the degree plan.									

### Doctoral Students

Doctoral students that have a master’s degree in a related field are required to submit a degree plan with 64 hours of coursework.

Doctoral students that **do not** have a master’s degree in a related field will be required to submit a degree plan with 96 hours of coursework. The degree plan must include OCNG 603 (Communicating Ocean Science), OCNG 608 (Physical Oceanography), OCNG 620 (Biological Oceanography), OCNG 630 (Geological Oceanography), and OCNG 640 (Chemical Oceanography), and 2 hours of OCNG 681 (Seminar). No more than 6 credit hours of 300 and 400-level classes can be used on a Ph.D. degree plan.

All doctoral students will also be required to meet a [residence requirement](#), successfully complete a preliminary exam, submit a research proposal, be admitted to doctoral candidacy, complete their final defense, as well as submit a Dissertation. All doctoral students must have at least four committee members, with at least one member who has a primary administrative location in the Department

of Oceanography. The chair must have chair status in OCNG and at least one outside member is required. The outside committee member must be on the TAMU [Graduate Faculty](#), but their primary affiliation must be with another department. Doctoral students who do not have a M.S. degree in a related field are also required to pass a qualifying exam to by-pass the M.S.

**Sample Degree for 64-hour Doctor of Philosophy in Oceanography (Ph.D.) (entering with M.S.)**

	<b>SEMESTER 1</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 2</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>	OCNG 608 – Physical	3	OCNG 620 – Biological	3	OCNG 691 – Research	6
	OCNG 640 – Chemical	3	OCNG 630 – Geological	3		
	OCNG 681 – Seminar	1	OCNG 603 – Comm.	3		
	OCNG 691 – Research	2				
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>SEMESTER 3</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 4</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>Hr</b>
<b>YEAR 2</b>	OCNG 600-level	3	OCNG 600-level elective	3	OCNG 691 – Research	6
	OCNG 681 – Seminar	1	OCNG 691 - Research	6		
	OCNG 691 - Research	5				
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>SEMESTER 5</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 6</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>		
<b>YEAR 3</b>	OCNG 600-level	3	OCNG 691 - Research	9		
	OCNG 691 - Research	6				
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>		
<b>Total = 66 credit hours (only 64 credit hours are needed for degree) plan)</b>						

**Sample Degree for 96-hour Doctor of Philosophy in Oceanography  
(Ph.D.) (by-passing M.S.)**

	<b>SEMESTER 1</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 2</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>	OCNG 608 – Physical	3	OCNG 620 – Biological	3	OCNG 691 – Research	6
	OCNG 640 – Chemical	3	OCNG 630 – Geological	3		
	OCNG 681 – Seminar	1	OCNG 603 – Comm. Ocean	3		
	OCNG 691 – Research	2				
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>SEMESTER 3</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 4</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 2</b>	OCNG 600-level	3	OCNG 600-level elective	3	OCNG 691 – Research	6
	OCNG 681 – Seminar	1	OCNG 691 - Research	6		
	OCNG 691 - Research	5				
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>SEMESTER 5</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 6</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 3</b>	OCNG 600-level	3	OCNG 691 - Research	9	OCNG 691 – Research	6
	OCNG 691 - Research	6				
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>SEMESTER 7</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 8</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 4</b>	OCNG 691 - Research	9	OCNG 691 - Research	9	OCNG 691 – Research	6
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Total = 96 credit hours</b>						

**Master of Ocean Science Technology Students (MOST)**

All MOST students are required to submit a degree plan with at least 36 hours of coursework. All students are also required to take OCNG 603 (Communicating Ocean Science), OCNG 604 (Ocean Observing Systems), OCNG 608 (Physical Oceanography), OCNG 655 (Experimental Design and Analysis in Oceanography), OCNG 657 (Data Methods and Graphical Representation in Oceanography) and OCNG 661 (Advanced Oceanographic Data Analysis and Communication). They must also choose 1 of the following Fundamentals of Ocean Science courses: OCNG 620 (Biological Oceanography), OCNG 630 (Geological Oceanography), or OCNG 640 (Chemical Oceanography); and choose 1 of the following programming courses: OCNG 656 (MATLAB programming for Ocean Sciences) or OCNG 669 (Python for Geosciences). Students may not have any OCNG 691 (Research) credit hours on their degree plan. No 300 and 400-level classes can be used on a MOST degree plan. MOST students will also be required to complete a [residence requirement](#).

### Sample MOST Degree - 4-semester model

		<b>SEMESTER 1</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 2</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>		OCNG 608	3	OCNG 657	3
		OCNG 655	3	OCNG 603	3
		OCNG 656 or 669	3	Fundamentals of Ocean Science	3
		<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>
		<b>SEMESTER 3</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 4</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 2</b>		OCNG 604	3	OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3
		OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3	OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3
		OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3	OCNG 661	3
		<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total = 36 credit hours</b>					

### Sample MOST Degree - 3-semester model

		<b>SEMESTER 1</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>	<b>SEMESTER 2</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>		OCNG 604	3	OCNG 657	3
		OCNG 608	3	OCNG 603	3
		OCNG 655	3	Fundamentals of Ocean Science	3
		OCNG 656 or 669	3	OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3
		<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>12</b>
		<b>SEMESTER 3</b>	<b>Hrs.</b>		
<b>YEAR 2</b>		OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3		
		OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3		
		OCNG Advanced Specialized Course	3		
		OCNG 661	3		
	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>12</b>			
<b>Total = 36 credit hours</b>					

## Degree Plan

A student regardless of degree program files a degree plan through the Graduate and Professional School through the [Document Processing Submission System](#). The degree plan is the official listing of coursework completed during the degree. It is also the official declaration of the student's committee chair (faculty advisor) and members. Students should not list more than the minimum credits for the degree. All courses completed will appear on the student transcript regardless of if they are listed on the degree plan.

M.S. committees require 3 committee members with at least 1 outside member. Ph.D. committees require 4 committee members with at least 1 outside member. **For degree plans or committee member petitions filed after August 2021, all M.S. and Ph.D. committees must have at least one faculty member whose primary administrative location (adloc) is in the Department of Oceanography.** The outside committee member must be on the TAMU [Graduate Faculty](#) and their primary affiliation must be with another department. In some cases, a student may want someone from outside of TAMU to serve on their committee. There is a lengthy process to add a non-TAMU person to the graduate faculty that can take several months. To initiate this process, the student's faculty advisor should contact the Oceanography Department Head. **The non-TAMU person will not count as an outside committee member because their graduate faculty appointment will be in the Oceanography department.**

**Note:** If a student would like a co-chair who does not already have chair status in OCNG, they must seek the department head's approval before submitting their degree plan. GPS maintains a list of grad faculty members and their current approved roles [here](#).

**Note:** Below are the minimum requirements for degree plans. The student should always build the degree plan in close consultation with their faculty advisor. There may be additional coursework listed on the degree plan in lieu of research hours.

**Note:** Enrolling in classes that are not listed on the student's degree plan may impact financial aid packages. A student should consult with the [Scholarships and Financial Aid office](#) about this restriction if applying for federal financial aid.

**Note:** There is a [limit](#) to the number of distance courses (e.g. online or web-based) a student can take if enrolled in a non-distance degree program. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they have not exceeded this limit.

**Note:** All 691 hours that a student enrolls in must be OCNG 691, regardless of the home department of your committee chair or other committee members.

**Degree Plan for Master of Ocean Science and Technology  
(36 credit hours)**

Course	Credit Hours
OCNG 603 – Communicating Ocean Science	3
OCNG 604 – Ocean Observing Systems	3
OCNG 608 – Physical Oceanography	3
OCNG 655 – Experimental Design and Analysis in Oceanography	3
OCNG 657 – Data Methods and Graphical Representation in Oceanography	3
OCNG 661- Advanced Oceanographic Data Analysis and Communication	3
Choose 1 of the following: OCNG 620 – Biological Oceanography OCNG 630 – Geological Oceanography OCNG 640 – Chemical Oceanography	3
Choose 1 of the following: OCNG 656 – MATLAB Programming for Ocean Sciences OCNG 630 – Python for Geosciences	3
Choose 12 credit hours from the following: OCNG 600 – 689	12

**Degree Plan for Master of Science in Oceanography  
(32 credit hours)**

Course	Credit Hours
OCNG 603 – Communicating Ocean Science	3
OCNG 608 – Physical Oceanography	3
OCNG 620 – Biological Oceanography	3
OCNG 630 – Geological Oceanography	3
OCNG 640 – Chemical Oceanography	3
OCNG 681 – Seminar (2 semesters)	2
OCNG 691 – Research (maximum of 8 credits allowed)	8*
Additional coursework (e.g., OCNG 600 – 689 or other 600-level courses)	7*

\* Additional coursework may be added in lieu of research hours.

**Degree Plan for Ph.D. in Oceanography (96 credit hours)**

Course	Credit Hours
OCNG 603 – Communicating Ocean Science	3
OCNG 608 – Physical Oceanography	3
OCNG 620 – Biological Oceanography	3
OCNG 630 – Geological Oceanography	3
OCNG 640 – Chemical Oceanography	3
OCNG 681 – Seminar (2 semesters)	2
OCNG 691 – Research *	79*

\* Additional coursework may be added in lieu of research hours.

### **Degree Plan for Ph.D. in Oceanography (64 credit hours)**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
OCNG 603 – Communicating Ocean Science	3
OCNG 608 – Physical Oceanography	3
OCNG 620 – Biological Oceanography	3
OCNG 630 – Geological Oceanography	3
OCNG 640 – Chemical Oceanography	3
OCNG 681 – Seminar (2 semesters)	2
OCNG 691 – Research *	47*

\* Additional coursework may be added in lieu of research hours.

### **Degree Plan for Students pursuing Ph.D. in Oceanography with M.S. in Oceanography from TAMU**

Students who complete a M.S. in Oceanography from TAMU and continue on to the Ph.D. in Oceanography do not have to repeat required courses. Required coursework counted on the M.S. degree plan, thus should not be listed on the Ph.D. degree plan. The student must have at least one graded course on their degree plan to have a GPA. The student will likely have other graded coursework to take during their Ph.D. and should consult with their faculty advisor when submitting the degree plan. At a minimum, the degree plan should look like the table below.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
OCNG 600-689 (1 graded course, excluded pass/fail courses e.g., 681 – seminar)	3
OCNG 691 – Research*	61*

\* Additional coursework may be added in lieu of research hours.

### **Degree Plan for Students pursuing Ph.D. in Oceanography with M.S. in Oceanography from Another Institution**

Students who complete a M.S. in Oceanography from another institution and have waived some of the required courses should not list the waived courses on the degree plan. Additionally, seminar is not waived. The student must have at least one graded course on their degree plan to have a GPA. The student will likely have other graded coursework to take during their Ph.D. and should consult with their faculty advisor when submitting the degree plan. At a minimum, the degree plan should look like the table below.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
OCNG 600-689 (1 graded course, excluded pass/fail courses e.g., 681 – seminar)	3

OCNG 681 – Seminar (2 semesters)	2
OCNG 691 – Research*	59*

\* Additional coursework may be added in lieu of research hours.

## Degree Timelines

All students are expected to meet departmental and Graduate and Professional School (GPS) deadlines to ensure successful completion of degree requirements and graduation. It is important that graduate students stay on top of deadlines for their degree requirements as they matriculate through their chosen program. Each Semester, GPS publicizes the deadlines by which graduate students must complete specific degree requirements to be eligible to remain a degree candidate and graduate. GPS calendars for all graduate programs can be found [here](#).

### University Requirements

#### Master’s Students (M.S. and MOST)

- Steps to fulfill Master’s Degree (thesis and non-thesis) requirements can be found [here](#).

#### Doctoral Students (with M.S. and without M.S.)

- Steps to fulfill Doctoral Degree requirements can be found [here](#).
  - Steps to fulfill preliminary exam requirements can be found [here](#).

### Departmental Requirements

In addition to the University requirements, the Department of Oceanography has adopted the following requirements for students to be making **satisfactory progress**. Students not making satisfactory progress may become ineligible for departmental support including scholarships and/or graduate assistantships or be separated from the university.

**All thesis-based student must complete the following yearly requirements:**

- **Graduate Learning Community workshop (first year MS and PhD students only):** The Department of Oceanography offers a professional development workshop series tailored for first year thesis-based students. Attendance is mandatory in the first year; however, all students are welcome to attend. The year-long workshop meets 4-5 times each semester and



covers a variety of topics including curriculum, proposal writing, and careers.

- **Annual Evaluations:** All M.S. and Ph.D. students in the Department of Oceanography are required to complete and submit a Graduate Student Annual Evaluation. The form is to be completed and signed by the student and their faculty advisor stating and documenting the student's progress for the previous calendar year and goals for the upcoming year. Forms are sent out via the Oceanography Graduate Student Listserv at the end of the Fall semester. Students will have a hold placed on their account for Summer/Fall registration until the annual evaluation is submitted to the Academic Advisor.
- **Annual Committee Meeting:** Once a student has formed a committee, all thesis-based graduate students are required to hold a committee meeting once per calendar year. A preliminary exam or a final defense can be substituted for the committee meeting requirement. Students will have a hold placed on their account during the Fall semester until this requirement is met. **Graduate students will need to submit a "committee meeting report form" to the Academic Advisor to have the hold removed.**
- **Annual Seminar:** All PhD students who have completed 2 or more years of study must give an annual seminar during the regular departmental seminar. PhD student seminar slots will be coordinated by the Department Head each semester. A hold will go on the student's account and removed when the seminar requirement is met.

### **Requirements for students admitted to the M.S. or MOST programs**

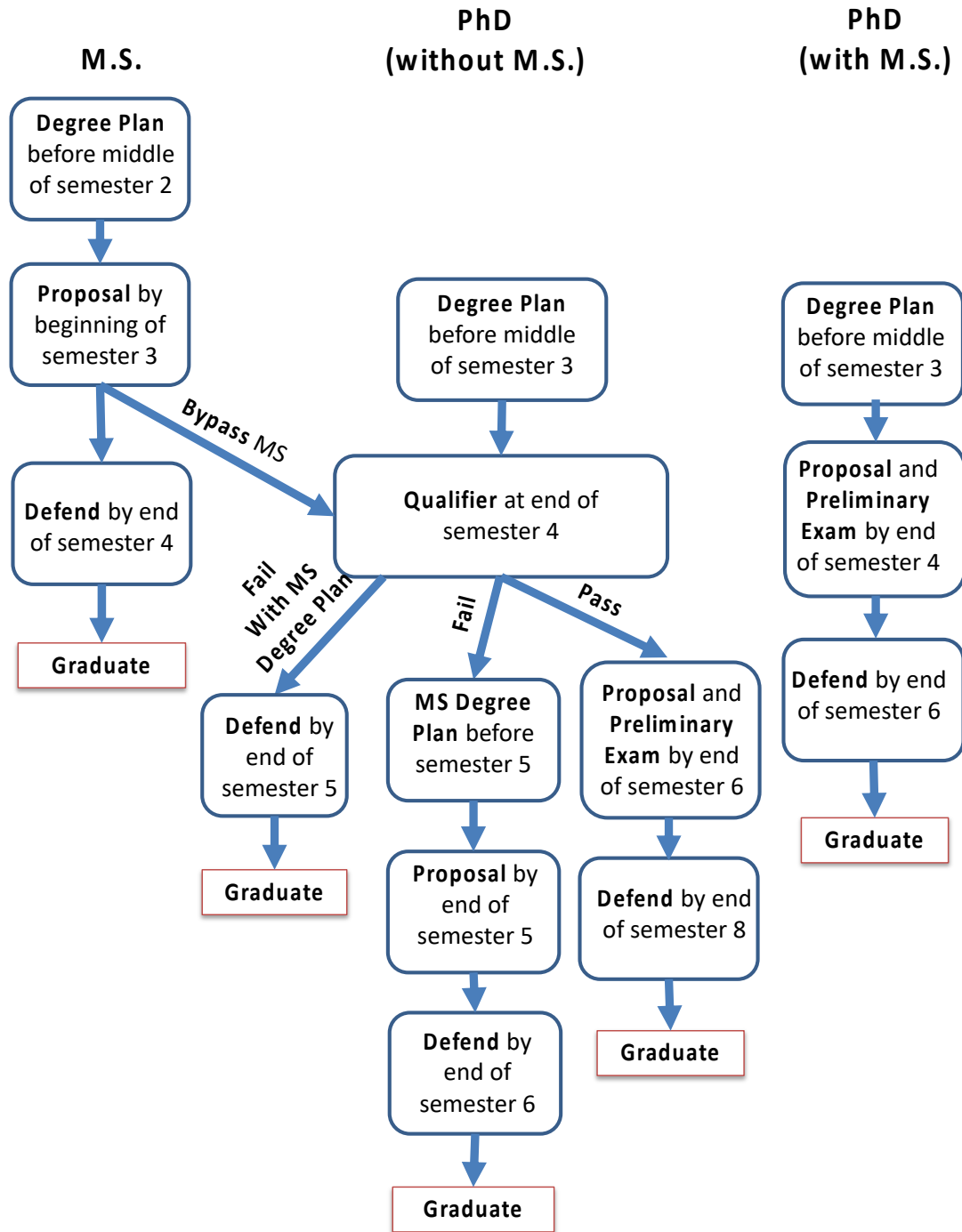
- **Degree Plans:** The degree plan is submitted before registering for the third regular semester. A hold is put on the student's account during the 2<sup>nd</sup> regular semester and is removed when the degree plan is approved by GPS.
- **Thesis Proposal (M.S. only):** An approved thesis proposal is submitted before the start of the third regular semester.

- **Final Defense and Thesis (M.S. only):** Students defend and submit their approved thesis by the end of the fourth regular semester.

**Requirements for students admitted to the Ph.D. program with (64-hour Ph.D.) and without a thesis-based M.S. in Oceanography or related field (96-hour Ph.D.).**

- **Degree Plans:** The degree plan is submitted before registering for the fourth regular semester. A hold is put on the student's account during the 3rd regular semester and is removed when the degree plan is approved by GPS.
- **Qualifying Exam (students without a M.S. in a related field):** Students admitted to the Ph.D. Program without a thesis-based M.S. degree in Oceanography or related field are required to pass a qualifying exam at the end of the fourth regular semester. Please see the Qualifying exam section for further details.
  - Note: A student who does not pass the qualifying exam will be allowed to finish a M.S. and should change their degree program to M.S. immediately.
- **Dissertation Proposal and Preliminary Exam:** Oceanography requires the Proposal and Preliminary Exam be completed by the end of the fourth regular semester for 64-hour PhD students, or by the end of the sixth regular semester for 96-hour PhD students.
  - Note: The oral component of the preliminary exam is typically a proposal defense.

## Thesis-Based Oceanography Graduate Degree Deadlines



# Maintaining Good Standing

## Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements

All graduate students have two GPAs, and both must be at least 3.0 to be in good standing to conduct any type of exam or to graduate:

- Degree Plan GPA** – includes all courses listed on the degree plan except transfer course work.
- Cumulative GPA** –computed by using all graded graduate (600- and 700- level) and advanced undergraduate (300- and 400-level) coursework completed at Texas A&M University and eligible to be applied toward a graduate degree. Those involving grades of W-drop (W), Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), and Q- drop (Q) shall be excluded.

A graduate student will not receive graduate degree credit for undergraduate courses taken on a satisfactory / unsatisfactory (S/U) basis. A graduate student may not receive grades other than satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) in graduate courses bearing the numbers 681, 684, 690, 691, 692, 693, and 695 (except for ALEC 695, BUAD 693, AGECE 695, GEOG 695, and IBUS 692). Any other graduate course taken on an S/U basis may not be used on a graduate degree plan (except CHEM 686 and CHEM 697). Graduate courses not on the degree plan may be taken on an S/U basis.

## Repeat Courses and Grade Exclusions

Only grades of A, B, C and S are acceptable for graduate credit. Grades of D, F or Unsatisfactory (U) for courses on the degree plan must be absolved by repeating the courses at Texas A&M University and achieving grades of C or above or Satisfactory (S). If a course has been taken more than once and a grade of D or F was earned and then repeated for a grade of C or higher, the original grades of D or F will be excluded from the GPA calculation for the degree plan (if applicable) and cumulative GPA but remain on the student's permanent record. A course in which the final grade is C may be repeated for a higher grade. If the second grade is higher, the original grade will be excluded from the GPA calculation for the degree plan (if applicable) and cumulative GPA but remain on the student's permanent record. Grades for repeated courses are not automatically replaced; this must be entered and recomputed manually by GPS.

A student repeating a course in which a grade of B or better was originally earned will not receive grade points for the repeated course,

unless the catalog states the course may be repeated for credit.

## **Scholastic Deficiency and Probation**

A degree-seeking graduate student is [scholastically deficient](#) if:

- Their Cumulative GPA or Degree Plan GPA falls below 3.00 or below a higher standard set by the department or college of affiliation (e.g., a university fellowship requiring a higher GPA); or
- They fail to show acceptable proficiency in such other requisites for their degree as may be assigned by their graduate committee, department or the [Graduate and Professional School](#) (e.g., qualifying and preliminary examinations, research, writing or a thesis or dissertation, etc.)

The Department of Oceanography has the following procedure for scholastic deficiency due to GPA:

- After a semester where a student's GPA falls below 3.0, the student is sent a warning letter from the department reminding them of the University requirements (Student Rule 10.4.3) and telling them they need to raise their GPA to at least a 3.0.
- The student must meet with their faculty advisor to create an improvement plan to raise their GPA to at least a 3.0. The plan must be sent to the academic advisor and department head.
- If the minimum GPA is not attained by the end of the next regular semester (e.g., Fall or Spring), the student may be separated from the university.

**Note:** Any eligible coursework not applied towards a prior graduate degree, and not exceeding time limits, will be included in the student's GPA for the subsequent degree program.

The Department of Oceanography has the following procedure for all non-GPA scholastic deficiencies:

- After a semester where a student receives a grade of U for any 691 credit hours, an unsatisfactory rating from their faculty advisor recorded in the Annual Student Evaluation, or other forms of scholastic deficiency as indicated in [Student Rule 12.3](#), the student is sent a warning letter from the department.
- The student must meet with their faculty advisor to create an improvement plan to remediate the scholastic deficiency(ies). The plan must be sent to the academic advisor and department head.
- If the scholastic deficiency(ies) is not resolved by the end of the next regular semester (e.g., Fall or Spring), the student may be

separated from the university.

## **Separation of a Graduate Student from the University**

For policies and procedures on dismissal of a graduate student please refer to [student rule 12](#).

## **Degree Classifications**

Each student has a classification, which indicates the type of degree program in which the student is enrolled and reflects the student's progress within that program at the professional level. Most graduate students in the Department of Oceanography will be classified as either:

- G7: admission to a master's level program of study or admission to a doctoral program of a student who has not yet completed a master's degree or 30 hours of eligible coursework taken at Texas A&M
- G8: admission to a doctoral level program of study

A full listing of degree classifications can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

## **Registration**

### **Note to All Students**

It is extremely important that all student register for classes as early as possible and pay tuition on time. Pre-registration does **not** require early payment of tuition and fees. Pre-registration facilitates planning for students and faculty. Each graduate course must have 5 students enrolled or it will be cancelled. When you pre-register, you allow faculty to foresee if a small class will be offered or if it is in danger of being cancelled. The department can then inform you of the status of the course in time for you to register for another class if necessary.

It is your responsibility to register yourself, which includes checking your student account for any holds that your attention before you can register. The Oceanography Academic Advisor can make sure all section that are needed are open, e.g., if you need a section of research hours (OCNG 691) under your faculty advisor, but there is not one, the academic advisor can create the section.

Registering for courses is done via the [Howdy web portal](#). Under the *MyRecord* tab you can search the online schedule of classes and register. Your course selection should be made with close consultation of your faculty advisor.

### **Full-Time Students**

Graduate students must enroll in nine hours for fall/spring terms and six hours for the 10-week summer term to be considered full-time for assistantship, scholarship, and fellowship purposes. International students holding F-1 or J-1 visas are required by federal regulations to register for and complete a “full course of study” to maintain legal immigration status.

### **Half-Time Students**

For domestic graduate students to be eligible for financial aid, they must be registered at least half-time. Half-time registration requires:

Fall/Spring – 5 hours

10 Week Summer – 3 hours

5 Week Summer – 2 hours

### **Continuous Registration**

Students in graduate degree programs requiring a thesis, dissertation, internship, or record of study, who have completed all graded course work on the degree plan are required to be in continuous registration for Fall and Spring semesters until all requirements for the degree have been completed. Non-thesis students must maintain continuous enrollment until all degree plan courses are completed but are not held to the continuous registration requirement after that unless the department or college has a requirement to do so. The minimal requirement to maintain continuous enrollment can be satisfied by registering for 1 credit hour. The continuous registration requirement may be satisfied by registering *In Absentia* or *In Residence*.

International students should check with ISS for the minimum hours they must be enrolled in for visa purposes. Students on assistantships and many fellowships must maintain full-time enrollment.

A student who does not comply with the continuous registration requirement will be blocked from registration. The student will be allowed to register only after receiving a favorable recommendation from a departmental review committee (not the student’s advisory committee), the endorsement of the department head, or Chair of the Intercollegiate Program and the approval of the Graduate and

Professional School.

### **Registering in Absentia**

To qualify for *In Absentia* registration, a student must not have access to or use facilities or properties belonging to or under the jurisdiction of The Texas A&M University System at any time during the semester or summer term for which they are enrolled. A student who qualifies for *In Absentia* registration is required to register each subsequent fall and spring semester for a minimum of one and maximum of four credit hours of 691, 684, 685 or 692. Departments and colleges may have additional or higher requirements.

An international student may have additional registration requirements depending on their visa status. The international student should consult with the International Student Services Web site or an International Student Services advisor to obtain current information on these requirements.

### **Late Drop and Add**

Students may drop and add courses via web registration through the 5th class day of a fall or spring semester, or through the 4th class day of a summer term. After the open drop/add period, students must obtain approval from their academic dean to drop or add courses. Students who need to drop or add a course after the open drop/add period should contact their academic dean's office for information on how to submit their request. Extenuating circumstances need to exist to request a late drop or add. Students seeking the Q-Drop option must complete a Q-Drop Request form, which is then processed in the academic dean's office or in the student's major department.

**Note:** All Oceanography graduate students are limited to one Q-drop per degree program.

### **Reduced Course Load (International Students Only)**

Any F-1 or J-1 student who wishes to drop below full-time enrollment should complete either the [F-1 or J-1 Reduced Course Load form](#). The authorized exceptions to the full course of study requirement and the rules for reduced course load are included with the form. The Oceanography Department Head approves reduced course load applications only for extenuating circumstances.

### **Registration Holds**

You can check for registration holds on the My Record tab in Howdy.



## Leave of Absence

Under unusual circumstances, a student may petition for a leave of absence. More detailed information on a leave of absence can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

# Funding Opportunities

## Financing Your Graduate Education at Texas A&M

Educational expenses for nine months will vary according to your personal needs and course of study. [Student Business Services](#) provides an estimated budget for new graduate students (including tuition and fees, books, supplies, transportation, room and board, incidental and living expenses).

## Graduate Assistantships

There are four types of graduate assistantships available at TAMU. Most of these positions require service of 20 hours per week. Although individual colleges may have higher requirements, graduate students holding assistantships must be registered for a minimum of nine credit hours during a fall or spring semester, or for six credit hours during the summer. Assistantships terminate upon failure to maintain the minimum enrollment requirement. Students serving in these roles are eligible for insurance benefits and in some cases may pay tuition and fees at the in-state rate. Graduate Assistants cannot be employed greater than 50% effort (20 hours per week) without approval from the Department of Oceanography, the student's advisory chair, and the Graduate and Professional School.

A graduate student holding an assistantship is an employee of the State of Texas. All state employees are bound by state law and university business and ethics policies. All state employees are required to complete Human Resources trainings. A listing of your assigned training course can be found under the Traintraq tab at [sso.tamu.edu](http://sso.tamu.edu).

**Note:** The University requires that GAR, GAT, and GAL graduate assistantships cover 9-credit hours of tuition and all university required fees for Ph.D. students who are within their first four years of study (64-hour Ph.D. students) or first five years of study (96-hour Ph.D. students). Tuition and/or fee coverage for Ph.D. students outside of this requirement and also M.S. students is up to the employee's supervisor (hiring P.I. or department).

## Responsibilities of a Graduate Assistant

- You are a half time employee of the State of Texas
- You must register full-time before classes begin to work
- Vacations consist of university holidays, not academic breaks. This means that you may have to perform job duties on days when the university is open, but classes are not in session (e.g., reading days which typically occur around holidays and exams). You should check the [university academic calendar](#) for official university closures. Please note that there are several US holidays in which the University is still open, e.g., Labor Day and Good Friday.

## Payroll as a Graduate Assistant

Processing payroll paperwork takes time, especially at the beginning of a semester when hundreds of new employees are being added. Your new employee paperwork must be processed before August 16 (January 1) for Fall (Spring) to avoid delaying your paycheck. Like all TAMU employees, Graduate Assistants are paid for work already performed. For new Fall semester students, if you are added to payroll in time, you will receive your first paycheck around September 1 (1/2 month's pay: August 16-31). This means you should arrive in College Station with enough funds to move in, pay any balance on your student bill, and pay your expenses for at least one month.

**Note:** All state employees are expected to work at their respective campus. Employees needing long term arrangements to work remotely need to seek approval for Alternative Work Location (AWL). State employees cannot reside in a foreign country and remain on payroll.

**Graduate Assistant Teaching (GAT)** – Teaching Assistants in the Department of Oceanography typically teach sections of an undergraduate lab (e.g., OCNG 252) or assist with the introductory oceanography lecture (OCNG 251). GAT positions are only available to Ph.D. students.

**Graduate Assistant Non-Teaching (GANT)** - The student will typically work 20 hours per week completing various non-teaching duties within the department.

**Graduate Assistant Research (GAR)** – Research Assistants are paid from a research grant to complete research under a specific

Principle Investigator (PI). The PI typically is the student's faculty advisor but may be another faculty member. The student will usually (but not always) work on a research project that could serve as a Thesis/Dissertation project for the student. The student's stipend is typically covered by the research grant.

**Graduate Assistant Lecturer (GAL)** – This type of assistantship is restricted to Doctoral students with a M.S. degree in a related field or Doctoral students admitted to Doctoral candidacy (passed the preliminary examination, completed all degree plan coursework, have an approved proposal on file with the GPS office, and have met the required residency and /or ELPE requirements). A GAL has full classroom responsibilities for a 3-credit hour course. GALs are appointed at the discretion of the Department Head in consultation with the GAT coordinator and the student's faculty advisor.

### **Graduate Assistantship Pay Rates**

As of September 1, 2024, the monthly stipend for graduate student assistantships within the Department of Oceanography are as follows:

- \$2500: MS and PhD before candidacy
- \$2750: PhD after candidacy

**Note:** Pay rates are set by the employing department, not the student's degree departmental home. If a graduate student is employed by a department other than Oceanography, their pay rate may not match the rates listed above.

### **TA Training**

All new GATs and GALs are required to take a mandatory [training course](#) provided by the Center for Teaching Excellence at Texas A&M University prior to teaching. Additionally, all GATs and GALs (new and returning) are required to participate in a departmental training each semester.

### **Graduate Student Health Insurance**

All students holding graduate assistantships will be eligible for [health insurance](#). The university will cover a portion of the monthly premium with the employee responsible for the remaining amount.

### **Other Funding Opportunities**

The Graduate and Professional School maintains a detailed [list](#) of

TAMU and external funding opportunities for new and current graduate students including information on fellowships, scholarships, financial aid, and awards.

### **Research and Presentation (RAP) Travel Award**

The Graduate Student Research and Presentation Travel Award program supports graduate student travel to make presentations or conduct research by reimbursing students for some of the eligible expenses incurred. Detailed information regarding this grant and applications can be found [here](#).

### **Non-Resident Tuition Waivers**

A student may qualify for a non-resident tuition waiver if they meet one of the following criteria:

- are employed as a Graduate Assistant (GAT, GAL, GAR) and enrolled full time
- receive a competitively awarded university, college, or departmental scholarship of \$1,000 or greater

## **International Students**

Once admitted to the graduate program, international students will work closely with [International Student and Scholar Services](#) to obtain a visa and any additional requirements. The Department of Oceanography is not involved in the visa process, nor can it expedite the process. Questions about the visa process should be directed towards your assigned International Student and Scholar Services Advisor.

### **English Language Proficiency Requirements**

All international graduate students whose native language is not English must fulfill an English proficiency requirement through either English Proficiency Verification or English Proficiency Certification. English Proficiency Certification is [required by the State of Texas](#) before a graduate student is eligible to serve as a GAT, GAR, or any other position considered to be a teaching position (e.g., instructor, lecturer, etc.). All other students must be either English Proficiency Verified or English Proficiency Certified. Minimum requirements to meet English Proficiency Verification and Certification can be found [here](#). Students who do not meet English Language Certification by the TOEFL or IELTS speaking score, may take the [English Language Proficiency Exam \(ELPE\)](#).

## International Student Funding

Visit the International Student Services website for information on [financial resources](#).

## Core Course Waivers

A student that has previously completed required courses (e.g., Biological, Geological, Chemical, and/or Physical Oceanography) may be allowed to waive the course. Students should consult their faculty advisor on whether to seek a course waiver. **Students MUST request any course waivers within their first semester.**

Waivers may be approved for required graduate classes (e.g., MOST requires OCNG 604) if a grade of 'A' was obtained for the stacked 400-level undergraduate courses taken at Texas A&M-College Station. Students may be able to obtain a course waiver for graduate courses completed at another institution. For all course waivers, students should contact the Oceanography Academic Advisor to initiate the process.

A M.S. student who completes core courses at TAMU and continues to the Ph.D. does not need to file a core course waiver. Additionally, the student should not list any courses from their M.S. degree plan on their Ph.D. degree plan.

A student who waives core courses is still expected to be proficient in the course material. For example, a student who intends to take the Qualifying Exam to bypass the M.S. Degree will still be tested on core course knowledge regardless of course waivers.

**Note: A student should not list any waived courses on their degree plan because they will not enroll in and receive a grade for the course.** The student will still need to complete 32 hours of coursework for an M.S., degree, 36 hours for a MOST degree, and either 64 or 96 hours for a Ph.D. degree. In many cases, a Ph.D. student will replace the waived credit hours with research credits (OCNG 691) on the degree plan. However, a M.S. student typically needs to add additional graded courses (e.g., non-research hours) to their degree plan to replace the waived course credit hours so they do not exceed the GPS rule of a maximum of 8 research hours on a master's degree plan.

# Transfer Coursework

Transfer course work may be accepted contingent upon the approval of the student's advisory committee, department head, and the GPS office. Transfer work is handled on a case-by-case basis.

- Course(s) must be completed at an accredited U.S. institution or approved international institution with a grade of A or B and must be graduate level or upper-level undergraduate courses.
- In most cases, Master's students may transfer in 12 hours with the approval of their graduate committee, department, and GPS. Students should refer to the Graduate Catalog for specific transfer limitations by degree.
- A final official transcript (with grades) must be received by the Office of Admissions for all transfer work listed on the degree plan. A degree plan listing transfer work 'to be taken' will be approved pending receipt of the final official transcript listing such work. Once the transcript has been received, it will be used to verify that the courses in question meet all eligibility criteria.
- Students participating in the dual degree program with the Ocean University of China may transfer 20 credit hours only if the hours weren't previously used towards a degree.
- Master's students who are scheduling their final exam and are currently registered for transfer work must have confirmation of registration in the course from the attending university on file with GPS prior to approval of the final examination. Notification may be in the form of an unofficial transcript or a copy of the student's registration. Doctoral students are not eligible to transfer in course work during their last semester or the semester of their final examination.

## Q-Drop Limits

Graduate students in the department of Oceanography are permitted only one Q-Drop for all graduate coursework during their degree.

**Note:** Graduate students who are expected to maintain full time

enrollment (e.g., Graduate Teaching/Research Assistants, F-1 visa holders) cannot Q-drop a course if it drops their total credit hours below full-time status (9 credit hours in Fall and Spring, 6 credit hours in Summer).

## Qualifying Exam

The Qualifying Exam is required for all students intending to by-pass the M.S. and continue straight on to the PhD. The exam is offered at the end of the spring semester for students who have just completed their 3<sup>rd</sup> (spring admits) or 4<sup>th</sup> (fall admits) regular semester in the program. The following coursework must either be completed with a passing grade or have an approved waiver on file by the time of the exam: OCNG 608, OCNG 620, OCNG 630, and OCNG 640.

Students do not need to complete OCNG 603 prior to the exam; however, it is highly recommended to complete it within the first 2 years of study. Students who are not in good standing or have not completed/waived the required courses are ineligible to take the Qualifying exam and must switch their degree program from Ph.D. to M.S.

The exam is structured as follows:

- One exam for all students, regardless of intended subject specialty. The exam will be interdisciplinary. The base knowledge that will be included on the exam will come only from the core courses. No advanced subject knowledge will be expected on this exam. However, extrapolation, interpretation and analysis using this knowledge will be a part of the exam.
- Signed 'Intent to Bypass MS' forms are required and are available from the Academic Advisor
- The exam will only be given in the spring and must be taken at the end of the student's 3<sup>rd</sup> semester (if Spring admit) or 4<sup>th</sup> semester (if Fall admit).
- There will be no retakes.
- The exam will be given in one day with a morning session, a break for lunch, and an afternoon session. Each session is scored separately:

- If a student scores 70 or higher on both parts (morning and afternoon), they pass and can continue in the PhD. The student will still need to complete the preliminary exam, which should ideally occur by the end of the next year (year 3 – semester 6).
- If a student scores below 70 on either part (morning and/or afternoon), they fail the exam and must complete a M.S. including proposal, thesis, and defense. They still have the option to be admitted to the PhD program after completing the M.S. The student must file a M.S. degree plan immediately to ensure the student meets GPS graduation deadlines.

## The Preliminary Exam

A [preliminary examination](#) is required of doctoral students. For PhD students, the preliminary examination often has a written portion and an oral portion. The preliminary exam cannot be administered earlier than a date when the student is within approximately six credit hours of completion of the formal course work (i.e., all course work on the degree plan except 681, 684, 690, 691, and 692 courses).

Oceanography requires the Preliminary Exam and the Dissertation Proposal be completed by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester for PhD students entering with a thesis-based M.S. in Oceanography or a related field, or by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> regular semester for PhD students entering with a bachelor's degree.

Prior to scheduling the preliminary examination (including written and/or oral) with the other committee members, the committee chair will review with the student the eligibility criteria, using the [Preliminary Examination Checklist](#) to ensure that the student is eligible for the examination. If the student's prelim includes a written portion, the time between the written and oral portions should approximately 10 working days.

The chair will report the results of the examination using the Report of Preliminary Examination form, with the signatures of all committee members, and the Preliminary Examination Checklist. These forms must be submitted to GPS **within 10 working days of the scheduled oral examination date**. A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee, with at most one dissention, is required to pass the exam. A department can have a stricter requirement for the



number of positive votes required provided there is consistency within all degree programs within a department.

If a student fails the preliminary examination, there is no obligation for a re-examination. At their discretion, the advisory committee and GPS may allow re-examination when adequate time has passed to allow the student to address inadequacies emerging from the first examination (normally six months). It is highly recommended that a written summary of the deficiencies noted on the failed preliminary exam, along with recommendations for further study, be provided to the student within one week of the first examination.

Examination schedules must be arranged so that all members of Advisory Committee can be present for the preliminary exam. Substitutions should be requested only as an absolute necessity. Unless emergency circumstances exist, arrangements for a substitution should be made by the individual member of the Advisory Committee who is to be absent—not by the student involved, the Chair of the Advisory Committee, nor the Head of the student's major department. If a member must be absent from any scheduled examination, he or she should arrange with a Member of the Graduate Faculty from his or her department to sit at the examination as a substitute and should notify the Committee Chair. **No substitutions for the Chair will be approved.** If a Chair cannot attend a scheduled examination, or if two (or more) members of an Advisory Committee must be absent, the examination must be rescheduled.

After passing the required preliminary examination for the doctoral degree, the student must complete all remaining requirements within four calendar years. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the preliminary examination. With the approval of the advisory committee and department head or chair of the interdisciplinary program, the student may request an extension of the four years' time limit with the submission of a Petition for Extension of Time Limits to GPS.

## Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

To be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must

have: (1) completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690 and 691, (2) a Graduate GPA and a Degree Plan GPA of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan, (3) passed the preliminary examination (written and oral portions), (4) submitted an approved dissertation proposal, (5) met the residence requirements. The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

## Filing a Petition

There are two types of petitions offered by the GPS office. The “MDD Petition” (MDD: Major, Degree, or Department) and the “Long Form Petition”. All petitions are to be submitted online at <https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/>. Please be aware that a student may only have one petition in process through the DPSS system at one time. The GPS office must approve the petition before a new petition of either type may be created.

### **MDD Petition**

The MDD Petition is used to request a change of major, degree or department. A tutorial on how to create a MDD petition can be found [here](#).

### **Long Form Petition**

Allows a student to submit requests for any one or a combination of Committee Changes, Course Changes, Extension of Time Limits or for a Waiver/Exception of rules. A tutorial on how to create a Long Form Petition can be found [here](#).

Once the student submits a petition, it will be routed for approval. Some departments have a pre-committee staff approver (e.g., the Academic Advisor) that the petition must pass through before being routed to the committee chair. The chair must approve the petition before the rest of the committee members will have access to approve, and all committee members must approve before the department head/ departmental approver can approve. Once all these approvals have been added, the document is then routed to the GPS office for processing and approval.

# Final Examination (Final Defense)

**It is strongly recommended that you meet with the Oceanography Academic Advisor at the beginning of the semester you intend to defend to discuss deadlines and ensure you have met all degree requirements.** To be eligible to take a

final exam (final defense), students must have at least a 3.00 GPA for courses on the degree plan and for all courses completed at Texas A&M eligible to be applied to the degree plan, and there must be no unresolved grades of D, F, or U for any course listed on the degree plan. They must also have completed or be currently registered for all the courses listed on their degree plan and have met all English language requirements. In addition, doctoral students must be formally admitted to candidacy before a final exam can be requested.

A [\*\*Request and Announcement of the Final Examination\*\*](#) must be submitted to the Graduate and Professional School a minimum of 10 business days in advance of the scheduled date of the exam. GPS must be notified in writing of any cancellation or change to the scheduled examination date.

The final defense presentation is open to the public. The student should prepare a defense flyer and submit it to the academic advisor to circulate to the department. This must be done at the same time the student submits the Request and Announcement of the Final Examination.

Final examination results are reported through [\*\*ARCS\*\*](#). Committee members should not approve the final examination until after the defense has finished. A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee, with at most one dissention, is required to pass the final exam. Examinations that are not completed and reported to GPS within 10 business days of the scheduled examination date will be recorded as failures. A Master's student may be given only one opportunity to repeat the final examination and it must be within a period that does not extend beyond the end of the next regular semester. A doctoral student is allowed only one opportunity to take the final exam. Final examinations must be passed by the deadlines announced each semester or summer term by GPS for the student to graduate in that semester.

**Note:** Per University rules, the final defense may not be administered before the thesis/dissertation is available to all members of the student's advisory committee in substantially final form, and all members have had adequate time to review the document. This means your advisory committee needs to receive a near final copy of your thesis/dissertation **2 weeks before** the final defense.

### **Substitutions at the Final Defense**

Examination schedules must be arranged so that all members of Advisory Committee can be present for the Final Examination. Substitutions should be requested only as an absolute necessity. Unless emergency circumstances exist, arrangements for a substitution should be made by the individual member of the Advisory Committee who is to be absent—not by the student involved, the Chair of the Advisory Committee, nor the Head of the student's major department. If a member must be absent from any scheduled examination, he or she should arrange with a Member of the Graduate Faculty from his or her department to sit at the examination as a substitute and should notify the Committee Chair. **No substitutions for the Chair will be approved.** If a Chair cannot attend a scheduled examination, or if two (or more) members of an Advisory Committee must be absent, the examination must be rescheduled.

### **Timeline for Submittal and Graduation**

Master's and Doctoral students have one year from successfully completing the final examination to clear the Thesis Office and graduate. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the final examination. With the approval of the advisory committee and department head or chair of the interdisciplinary program, the student may request an extension of the one-year time limit with the submission of a Petition for Extension of Time Limits to GPS.

## **Thesis Office**

The Thesis Office reviews each electronic Thesis, Dissertation and Record of Study (ETD) for uniformity, consistency, and adherence to University guidelines for quality. In addition, the office also provides a wide range of preparation support and coordinates the timely release of the ETD for public access. Details on how to prepare and submit your Thesis/Dissertation can be found on the Thesis Office [webpage](#).

## Pre-Submittal Conference

Students are strongly encouraged to attend the [pre-submittal conference](#) prior to the oral defense. The pre-submittal conference is designed to provide guidance on preparation, submission and review of the ETD.

## Thesis/Dissertation Forms and Information

The following forms are required for M.S. students:

- [Approval of Written Thesis Form - Masters](#)
- [Copyright and Availability Form](#)

The following forms are required for Doctoral students:

- [Approval of Written Thesis Form -Dissertation](#)
- [Copyright and Availability Form](#)
- [Online Survey of Earned Doctorates and AAUDE Survey](#)

## Submitting your Thesis/Dissertation

Instructions on submitting the Thesis/Dissertation electronically can be found [here](#). After the student's draft has been reviewed, the student will be contacted by the Thesis Office, and will be informed of any corrections that need to be made. Students will be responsible for submitting their corrections by the deadlines on the GPS calendar for the respective semester in which they plan to graduate. Please be aware that students must have defended their Thesis or Dissertation before any Thesis forms may be submitted.

# Graduate and Professional School Required Forms

The Graduate and Professional School (GPS) serves as the main repository for all required forms throughout the course of graduate study. GPS uses ARCS for forms requiring signatures of committee members and department heads. Detailed information about all forms, as well as how to use ARCS can be found [here](#). All forms must be submitted and approved by the specified dates on the GPS calendar for the respective semester in which the student plans to graduate.

Most forms are initiated by the student and then routed to the appropriate approvers, usually the academic advisor, committee members, and department head. The table below lists all required

approvals.

Grad School Form	Who Approves Form	Who initiates form	Notes
<b>Proposal Approval</b>	-Academic Advisor -All Committee members -Dept. Head	Student	Completed in the DPSS
<b>Preliminary Exam Checklist and Report</b>	-Academic Advisor -All Committee members -Dept. Head	Student	
<b>Request for Final Examination</b>	-Academic Advisor -Committee Chair - Dept. Head	Student	Must be submitted at least 10 working days in advance of Defense date
<b>Report of Final Examination (Defense)</b>	-All Committee members	Graduate and Professional School	
<b>Written Thesis/ Dissertation Approval</b>	-Academic Advisor -All Committee Members - Dept. Head	Student	
<b>Thesis/ Dissertation Copyright Availability</b>	-Committee Chair	Student	

## Preparing to Graduate

It is highly recommended that you meet with the Oceanography Academic Advisor at the start of the semester you plan to defend or graduate. The Academic Advisor can check that you have met all degree requirements including courses on degree plan and residency requirements.

Students planning to graduate at the end of the current semester must apply for graduation. Information about application for degree, cap and gown rental and graduation ceremony dates can be found [here](#). Students are responsible for monitoring application for degree deadlines.

### International Students and Graduation/Departure

There are certain requirements & obligations that students holding F-1 and J-1 visas must meet prior to and after graduation. These requirements and obligations vary from student to student and are handled on a case-by-cases basis. For more information, please visit

[global.tamu.edu/isss](http://global.tamu.edu/isss) or call 979-845-1824.

## Letter of Intent

A student completing a graduate degree at Texas A&M who wants to continue in another graduate program may request to do so by filing an approved letter of intent with GPS if there is no break in enrollment, or if the break is less than one calendar year. A student, who has an enrollment break of more than one calendar year or longer following graduation, must re-apply through Graduate Admissions.

Students wishing to pursue a degree offered by the Department of Oceanography and are eligible to apply via the Letter of Intent will be evaluated on the same criteria used in the admissions process for all other applicants.

### **Students applying for the Ph.D. program with a M.S. in Oceanography from TAMU-College Station**

To apply via the letter of intent, the following should be submitted to the Chair of the Recruiting and Admissions Committee (RAC):

- Statement of Purpose
- Curriculum Vitae
- Unofficial transcripts
- Letter of support from prospective Ph.D. faculty advisor

**Note:** Students in this category will be considered current students regarding GAT or GAL support and scholarships.

### **Student applying for the M.S. or Ph.D. program with a Master's degree from TAMU, but not in Oceanography**

To apply via the letter of intent, the following should be submitted to the Chair of the Recruiting and Admissions Committee (RAC):

- Statement of Purpose
- Curriculum Vitae
- Unofficial transcripts
- 3 letters of recommendation (emailed directly to the RAC chair by letter writer)
- Letter of support from prospective faculty advisor

**Note:** Students in this category will be considered new students

regarding GAT or GAL support and scholarships.

All materials will be reviewed for admissions by RAC. If approved, RAC will request the student submit the Letter of Intent through ARCS for the department head's approval. Upon approval by GPS, a copy will be sent to the student, department, and ISS (if appropriate). Students should contact ISS directly to complete any required paperwork for admission into the new degree program.

**Note:** Students who are approved for a Letter of Intent, and do not attend the beginning semester indicated, must file a new Letter of Intent with the new semester indicated (if within one year of graduation). The Letter of Intent can only be approved once all degree requirements have been met. If the student is registered for graded course work in their last semester, the letter may not be able to be approved prior to final grades being submitted.

## Office Space

Office space is provided for thesis-based graduate students that hold Graduate Assistantships and/or Fellowships. Reassignment of office space is at the discretion of the department head.

Students that are provided office space will be required to fill out a key check out form to receive a key for their office space. The form must be signed by the student as well as their faculty advisor prior to receiving a key. Key forms are available in the department's main office. Students are allowed possession of their keys for as long as their office space is occupied. All keys must be returned prior to graduation and/or termination/resignation of Graduate Assistantship or Fellowship privileges.

Students that are granted office space will be provided with a desk and chair by the department. Any other supplies will be provided by the student at their own expense.

## Use of Departmental Equipment

Departmental equipment is any equipment that is owned by either the department or the university. All students are entitled to usage of departmental equipment if authorization is obtained beforehand. The department employs a strict rule that all equipment must be returned in good condition. Any damages to departmental equipment must be



reported immediately to the proper individual. Failure to use or return equipment properly may result in disciplinary action and/or loss of equipment use privileges.

## **Building Access, Parking & Computing Requirements**

### **Building Access**

All graduate students in the Department of Oceanography are entitled to building access during regular hours and after hours. Regular hours are from 7:30 A.M. - 5 P.M. Monday –Friday. During this time, students may enter the building through any door. Students who need access to the building after hours must enter through the designated after-hours entrances by swiping their university identification card. To obtain after hours building access, students should contact the Department Business Administrator.

### **Parking on College Station campus**

Parking on campus is heavily monitored 24-hours a day. Students wishing to park on campus must either obtain a parking permit and park in their designated lot, or park in a visitor's lot. Parking in an unauthorized area may result in a parking ticket, and/or towing of the student's car at their own expense. For information regarding parking, please see the transportation department website at <http://transportation.tamu.edu/>. Students traveling from the Galveston campus to the College Station campus with any valid TAMUG parking permit can park in designated College Station [parking lots](#). It is highly recommended to check the Parking [website](#) before each trip to College Station as special events (e.g., sporting events) can temporarily prohibit usage of some lots. If the student does not have a valid TAMUG parking permit, they should contact the Department of Oceanography Business Staff (ocng-staff-office@geos.tamu.edu; 979-845-7211) to inquire about guest parking options.

**Note:** When registering for a TAMUG parking permit, you will be prompted to enter in your license plate number. The College Station campus now uses license plates as parking permits. To avoid getting a parking ticket, check your parking account before traveling to College Station to make sure the license plate you entered matches the vehicle you plan to park on campus.

### **Parking on Galveston campus**

Parking on campus is heavily monitored 24-hours a day. Students wishing to park on campus must either obtain a [parking permit](#) and park in their designated lot, or park in a visitor's lot with a valid TAMU parking permit. Parking in an unauthorized area may result in a parking ticket, and/or towing of the student's car at their own expense. Students traveling from the College Station campus to the Galveston campus can use a valid TAMU parking pass but must comply with [visitor parking](#) regulations. To avoid getting a parking ticket, check your parking account before traveling to Galveston to make sure the license plate you entered matches the vehicle you plan to park on campus.

### **Computing Requirements**

The Department of Oceanography does not maintain computer labs. All graduate students are expected to have access to a computer that meets the [minimum university requirements](#).

### **Software**

Texas A&M University provides several software products to student for free or discounted pricing. A full list of available software and purchasing instructions can be found [here](#).

## **Official University Travel**

Certain trips such as conferences, research symposiums, and fieldwork may qualify as official university travel, and may be covered at the expense of the department and/or university. Claiming of such travel is done electronically through CONCUR through the [sso.tamus.edu](http://sso.tamus.edu) website. Students must receive proper training and authorization before using this website to claim travel as official university travel. Personal travel should not be claimed as official university travel. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain passports, health insurance and /or visas for the respective country they plan to visit when traveling abroad. For more information on obtaining passports and visas, please contact the Study Abroad Programs Office. For more information on official university travel, please contact the Oceanography department Business Administrator.

### **International Students**

International students holding F-1 and J-1 visas are encouraged to attend conferences, research symposiums, and conduct fieldwork during their studies at Texas A&M University. It is up to the student

to ensure that they have a valid passport, visa, health insurance and travel signature on their form I-20 or DS-2019 prior to traveling, especially when traveling abroad. Failure to remain in compliance with ISS and DHS policies may result in the loss of an international student visa, and/or the privilege to study at Texas A&M University. For more information on international student travel both domestically and internationally, please contact International Student Services.

## Student Grievances

Texas A&M University is committed to providing an educational and work climate that is conducive to the personal and professional development of everyone. To further that commitment, the university has developed procedures for students to pursue grievances within the university community. A list of the types of grievances as well as procedures can be found [here](#).

Within the Department of Oceanography, there are several avenues to report a grievance. The Oceanography department head has a long-standing “open door” policy and is willing to speak with a student about the proper channels to handle a grievance. If a student does not feel comfortable speaking with the Department Head, they should address their questions with the College of Arts and Sciences Dean of Graduate Affairs.

### Ombuds Officer

The Ombuds Officer serves as an informal, neutral, and confidential resource for graduate students to discuss questions and concerns related to their graduate experience. The university is a large and complex institution and graduate students often play multiple roles (e.g., student, research collaborator, instructor, technician, peer). Misunderstandings and conflicts can arise in any one of these roles. Having a safe, off-the-record conversation with an Ombuds Officer can be a first step if you do not know where to turn. The Ombuds Officer is here to help graduate students identify options for addressing concerns and will promote a fair and impartial process for all parties involved. Further information can be found [here](#).

## Students in Residence at Texas A&M Galveston

Some Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) Faculty have affiliations with graduate programs housed within various academic departments at Texas A&M University, such as the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, Department of Biology, and the Department of Oceanography. Therefore, some Oceanography thesis-based students will conduct their research primarily from the TAMUG campus for the duration of their degree. All Oceanography graduate students are considered TAMU College Station students, therefore those at TAMUG are required to follow the same degree requirements as in College Station. The OCNG Academic Advisor in College Station should be the first point of contact regarding academic questions from students in residence at TAMU-Galveston.

**Note:** Graduate students are billed tuition and fees for their program's home campus. Thus, Oceanography students based at TAMUG will be charged College Station tuition and fees regardless of if they are registered for TAMU or TAMUG classes. However, Student Business Services should process a fee waiver for services not available to TAMUG based Oceanography students.

### **Course work offered at the College Station Campus**

Several required courses for Oceanography graduate degrees are only offered on the College Station campus. Most of these courses are offered via live synchronous link (e.g., Zoom) to reduce required travel between campuses. Some courses are not fully able to be taught via live synchronous link and will require students to travel to College Station for either a portion of a course (e.g., final presentation) or the entire. Any Oceanography student in residence in Galveston who is required to travel to College Station for class attendance should contact their respective TAMUG Department Head regarding travel arrangements. The Department of Oceanography maintains a parking spot on the TAMU campus for official departmental use. Students traveling to College Station for class should contact the Oceanography Business Staff ([ocng-staff-office@geos.tamu.edu](mailto:ocng-staff-office@geos.tamu.edu)) to reserve the parking space. All users of the departmental parking space are required to uphold TAMU parking regulations. Parking in the departmental space without prior authorization from the department can result in the vehicle being towed at the student's expense.

### **Official University Travel on TAMU and TAMUG Funds**

Many students in residence at TAMUG are employees of TAMUG rather than TAMU, thus their CONCUR reports will not route through

Oceanography, but instead their employing department. There may be instances where a student's travel is being supported by both TAMU and TAMUG funds. For help in filing CONCUR reports of this complexity, please contact the Department of Oceanography Travel representative (see quick reference list). Students in residence at TAMUG should make sure they have elected the travel representative from the Department of Oceanography as a delegate in CONCUR.

# Quick Reference: Who to Contact with Questions (updated 8/20/2024)

## **Academics (classes, registration holds, GPS requirements, etc.)**

Heather Albrecht, Graduate Program Coordinator

([omb-grad-advising@tamu.edu](mailto:omb-grad-advising@tamu.edu))

Eller O&M 205 979-862-3290

## **Building and Room Access/Reservations**

Oceanography Business Staff ([ocng-staff-office@geos.tamu.edu](mailto:ocng-staff-office@geos.tamu.edu))

Eller O&M 1209 979-845-7211

## **Curriculum Questions**

Dr. Chrissy Wiederwohl, Chair of Curriculum and Advising

Committee ([chrissyw@tamu.edu](mailto:chrissyw@tamu.edu))

## **Qualifying Exam and Core Course Waivers**

Dr. Jessica Fitzsimmons, Chair of Qualifying Exam Committee

([jessfitz@tamu.edu](mailto:jessfitz@tamu.edu))

## **Office Space in College Station**

Dr. Shari Yvon-Lewis, Department Head ([syvon-lewis@tamu.edu](mailto:syvon-lewis@tamu.edu))

## **Payroll (if employed by TAMU Oceanography)**

Debbie Odstrcil, Business Administrator I ([dodstrcil@tamu.edu](mailto:dodstrcil@tamu.edu))

Eller O&M 1204A 979-845-7212

## **Payroll (if employed by TAMUG MCES)**

Gretchen Childress, Business Administrator

([gchildress@tamug.edu](mailto:gchildress@tamug.edu))

TAMUG Bldg #3029, 409-740-4426

## **Payroll (if employed by TAMUG MARB)**

Rachel Pepin, Business Administrator ([rachel.pepin@tamug.edu](mailto:rachel.pepin@tamug.edu))

TAMUG Bldg #3029, 409-740-4982

## **Scholarships (Departmental)**

Dr. Chrissy Wiederwohl, Chair of Recruiting and Admissions

Committee ([chrissyw@tamu.edu](mailto:chrissyw@tamu.edu))

**Signing Authority**

Dr. Shari Yvon-Lewis, Dept. Head, [syvon-lewis@tamu.edu](mailto:syvon-lewis@tamu.edu)

**Backup contact:** Dr. Chrissy Wiederwohl, [chrissyw@tamu.edu](mailto:chrissyw@tamu.edu)

**TAMUG Assistant Director of Graduate Studies**

Andrew Reitberger ([areitberger@tamug.edu](mailto:areitberger@tamug.edu)) 409-740-4941

**TAMUG Director of Graduate Studies**

Holly Richards ([richardh@tamug.edu](mailto:richardh@tamug.edu)) 409-740-4957

**Teaching Assistantships for TAMU Oceanography (GAT or GAL)**

Dr. Chrissy Wiederwohl, Associate Department Head

([chrissyw@tamu.edu](mailto:chrissyw@tamu.edu))

**Travel (if OCNG employee and/or using OCNG funds)**

Debbie Odstrcil, Business Administrator I ([dodstrcil@tamu.edu](mailto:dodstrcil@tamu.edu))

Eller O&M 1204A 979-845-7212

**Travel (if TAMUG MCES or MARB employee and/or using TAMUG funds)**

\*See Payroll contact for respective departments